



DECISION MEMO
CLEAR RIDGE NON-SYSTEM ROAD DECOMMISSIONING PROJECT
USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
Moose Creek Ranger District, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Idaho County, Idaho

I. Decision

I have decided to authorize decommissioning of approximately 65 miles of non-system roads in the northern half of the Clear Creek watershed. These roads are currently not open to public access and are not needed for future land management activities. These roads were identified through satellite imagery (LIDAR) but are not part of the inventoried Forest Service road system. These roads are typically grown over with trees and inaccessible. The project area is located in T31N, R6E and T32N, R6E. The area lies about 7 miles east of Kooskia, Boise Meridian, Idaho and Clearwater Counties, Idaho. Please see the attached map for road locations.

These roads are currently not maintained and are a result of past harvest in the 1960s and 1970s. Logging techniques have improved since then making the roads unnecessary for future management. Removal of these roads would improve hydrologic and soil function by decompacting and/or recontouring the roads. It would return about 260 acres of land back into more productive forested lands which would provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Design Criteria

The project includes design criteria identified below. These items are not all-inclusive, as the Forest Plan standards are incorporated by reference (USDA Forest Service 1987, as amended).

Although each road will receive a site specific prescription, general road decommissioning techniques include:

- Removing metal culverts and other drainage structures and associated fills from stream channels;
- Restoring stream channels by pulling up fills and laying back side slopes to original contours where feasible;
- Pulling up fill material, where there are existing or potential failures, or where the fill is determined to be unstable;
- Laying selected portions of the road to original contours where it is unstable;
- Outsloping the road surface; and

Because road decommissioning is a ground disturbing activity, several mitigation measures will be taken as needed to prevent damaging levels of sediment from entering streams. Mitigation measures may include any combination of the following:

- Placing removable sediment traps below work areas to trap fines during decommissioning work.
- Re-vegetating disturbed soils with grasses for short-term erosion protection and with shrubs and trees for long-term soil stability;
- Mulching with native materials where available, or using weed-free straw, to ensure coverage of exposed soils;
- Adding roughness and diversity elements including rock or log weirs, barbs and rootwads to dissipate energy in the newly restored stream channels;
- Armoring channel banks and dissipating energy with rock, wood and native plant clumps whenever possible; and
- Coordinating decommissioning activities to avoid spawning times and locations.

II. Rationale for Decision and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision

A. Category of Exclusion and Rationale for Using the Category

Based on information in this document and the project record, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances affecting resource conditions exist (36 CFR 220.6), that this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, and that it meets all the criteria outlined for 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(20) Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, excluding National Forest System Roads and National Forest System Trails, to a more natural condition that may include removing, replacing, or modifying drainage structures and ditches, reestablishing vegetation, reshaping natural contours and slopes, reestablishing drainage-ways, or other activities that would restore site productivity and reduce environmental impacts.

B. Finding No Extraordinary Circumstances

In compliance with 36 CFR 220.6, the following resource conditions were considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances existed to the resource conditions that could result in significant effects to the environment. Based on the findings for resource conditions described below, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances are associated with my decision.

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species:

The Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) Botanist, and Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists determined the proposed actions would have no direct or indirect effect or impact on listed or sensitive plant, wildlife, or fish species or habitat, and suitable habitat would not be altered because habitat is not present in the project area, habitat is present but the species do not occur in the project activity areas, or habitat is present and the species may occur, but the project would not affect the habitat for the species, and therefore no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding the effects to these resources, as documented in the Biological Assessments and Evaluations, and specialists' reports (see plant, wildlife, and fish sections of the project record), with the following exceptions.

Fish Species and Habitat

The Fisheries Biologist determined the proposed actions may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect individuals or habitat for ESA listed steelhead trout (a threatened species). The project may impact individuals or habitat of Westslope cutthroat trout, but are not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or reduce viability for the populations or species. There would be no effect to ESA listed bull trout or their habitat.

These determinations are based on potential short-term effects related to increases in suspended sediment when the culverts are removed. However, sediment deposition resulting from the project will be readily transported by the streams, and the amount of sediment is well within the streams' capacity to transport. Design criteria are incorporated into project design in order to minimize risks of disturbance to the stream and fish habitat.

Long-term, the project would result in a reduced risk that culverts would fail during an extreme flow event, thereby resulting in an improved condition for the streams and fish habitat. Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding the effects to fish species or habitat.

2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:

The project area is not located within a municipal watershed, and no actions are proposed that would modify or destroy wetlands, or modify or occupy floodplains to an extent greater than already exists. Where work is conducted at stream crossings, small amounts of sediment could be delivered to streams. However, the effects are expected to be low in intensity and of short duration. Therefore, no direct or indirect significant, adverse effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are proposed or expected for this project. Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding the effects to water quality of streams within the area; downstream waters; or resources in floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas:

The project area is not located within congressionally designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or Wild and Scenic River corridors. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

4. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas:

The project area is not located within an inventoried roadless area or potential wilderness area.

5. Research Natural Areas:

The project area does not include land designated as a Research Natural Area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

6. American Indians and Alaska native religious or cultural sites and

7. Archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas:

The proposed actions will have no effect on religious, cultural, archaeological sites or historic properties because previous inventories have adequately covered the project area

and no historic properties are present, or the project is located in an area identified as having a low probability for the presence of historic properties, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to native religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas.

Additionally, the Nez Perce Tribal Government Liaison and Nez Perce Tribal staff has had the opportunity to review the project for impacts to Nez Perce Tribe Treaty rights or Nez Perce Tribal members' abilities to exercise those rights. None were identified.

III. Interested and Affected Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Contacted

On March 31, 2014, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests mailed a letter providing information and seeking public comment to 160 individuals, organizations, a variety of state and local agencies, and the Nez Perce Tribe. Five individuals/agencies responded during the public comment period. We considered their comments and although some respondents questioned effects to water quality, lack of multiple use in the area, and private land acquisition or use, we analyzed the effects of project activities on these the resources, and determined no significant issues concerning extraordinary circumstances, use of the 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(20) category, or Forest Plan compliance were raised. The letters are located in the project record.

IV. Findings Required by Other Laws

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project, I find that this project is consistent with applicable Federal laws and regulations.

National Forest Management Act and Nez Perce National Forest Plan: These actions are consistent with the Nez Perce National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 1987), as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 because they follow the standards and guidelines contained in those plans. In addition, the decision considers the best available science [36 CFR 219.35(a) (Reinstatement of the 2000 Planning Rule; 74 FR 242)].

V. Administrative Review and Appeal Opportunities, and Implementation Date

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations 36 CFR Part 215.12(f) and may be implemented immediately.

VI. Contact Person

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Karen Smith, Nez Perce- Clearwater National Forest Supervisor's Office, Kamiah Annex 1, 1012 Hwy 64, Kamiah, Idaho 83536 or by phone at (208) 935-4252 during normal office hours [weekdays, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (PST)].

VII. Signature of Deciding Officer



JOE HUDSON

Moose Creek District Ranger



Date